

The Forefather of the Rubenids

by Nicholas Adontz

This article, which was published in the journal *Byzantion*, 1935, t. X, fasc. 1, pp. 185-203, analyses the origins of Cilician Armenia's Rubenian dynasty of kings. The present English translation was made by Robert Bedrosian from the reprint of the text in *Études Arméno-byzantines* (Lisbon, 1965), pp. 177-195, "L'aïeul des Roubéniens." Attached to the document are the French original and an Armenian translation made by O. Vardazaryan (Ռուբինյանների նախահայրը) extracted from *Works of Nicholas Adontz in Five Volumes*, Volume 5 (Erevan, 2012), pp. 501-517 [in Armenian], P. H. Hovhannisyan, editor. Published on the Internet in 2018.

[Footnotes](#)

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The royal dynasty of Cilicia begins with Ruben, an individual about whose life we know almost nothing. What we know about him derives from information which has reached us from highly dubious sources.

Matthew of Edessa, an almost contemporary historian, cites the name of Ruben when narrating about the latter's son, Constantine, on the occasion of the invasion of the Crusaders. He writes: "In 546 of the Armenian Era [February 25, 1097—February 24, 1098], during the days of the patriarchs of the Armenians, Lord Vahram and Lord Barsegh, and during the reign of Alexius, emperor of the Byzantines, the army of the Westerners ("Romans") went on the move with an awesome multitude of some 500,000 men. [178] The prince of Edessa, T'oros, was informed about this by letter, as was the great prince of the Armenians, Kostandin, son of R'uben. [The latter] held the Taurus Mountains in the land of Kopitar in Marapa and also ruled over many other districts. He [had been] one of Gagik's troops" (1).

The same author informs us that in 548 of the Armenian Era [A.D. 1099]: "In this year there died the great prince of the Armenians, Kostandin, son of R'uben, leaving two sons: T'oros and Lewon. [Kostandin] had ruled over many cities and districts and also controlled most of the Taurus Mountains, which he had taken from the troops of the Persians by his own bravery. He had been of the troops of Gagik Bagratuni, son of Ashot. [Kostandin] died in this period, and there had been an omen in his House, foretelling his death. One day, when he was still alive, a flash of lightning struck the fortress named Vahka, hitting within the servants' residence some silver plates, and in one place penetrating through five of them. Savants said that this would be Kostandin's final year. Indeed, he died in this very year and was buried at the monastery called Kastagho'n" (2).

The death of Constantine is mentioned again under the year 549 of the Armenian Era [A.D.1100-1101].

T'oros, Constantine's son, killed the Mandale brothers, who had slain the Armenian king Gagik. After narrating this feat, Matthew of Edessa adds: "Then he thanked God Who took vengeance for the blood of Gagik, king of the Armenians—for [T'oros'] father's father, R'uben, had served in Gagik's army."

The legend of the death of Constantine allows us to consider that he ruled for seven years, according to the number of [commemorative] plates, and that he died in the eighth year. If Constantine's death is placed in 1099-1100 or, according to a second reference, in 1100-1101, then his eight-year reign must have started in 1091 or 1092. As a result, his father Ruben, whom he succeeded, died in 1091-1092. Ruben is cited twice [179] as being part of "the troops/army," **ի գաւրաց**, of Gagik, and one time as "of his descendants," **ի գաւաւկաց**. The question of whether Ruben was one of Gagik's officers or his relative remains open. Ruben ruled at Kopitar in the Marapa country.

After Matthew, it is Samuel [of Ani], an author of the 12th century, who holds next place from the standpoint of antiquity. Under the year 525 A.E. [A.D. 1076-1077], (and not in 575 as the printed text has it), Samuel narrates the history of the assassination of Gagik by the Mandale brothers and says that after this event "the Armenian princes and all their troops lost courage and dispersed on all sides; one of them, whose name was Ruben, and who was a relative of Gagik and lord of the fortress of Kopitar', upon hearing about Gagik's death, arose with all his folk and came to the Phrygian areas, to the village named Kolimozolo. He settled there where, on the mountain, many Armenians dwelled. He rallied them all and, becoming stronger, took over the mountainous areas, driving out the Romans [Byzantines] and seizing their lands. Reaching the age of 70, after a pious life, Ruben passed to Christ and was buried in the holy convent of Kastalon, leaving the power to his own son, Constantine, who conquered the famous castle called Vahka and settled there" (1).

Samuel knows about the fabulous circumstances of Constantine's death, but he presents them in such a way that the legend's sense has been lost. According to him, "in 1102, or 549 A.E. [1100-1101], one day Constantine, Ruben's son, was sitting at his place in Vakha, holding before him a silver plate. The plate suddenly flew through the air into a corner of the house, where seven other plates were located. This was held to presage the demise of Constantine; and, in fact, he died. He was buried near his father at the blessed monastery of Kastalon. Power passed to his senior son, T'oros, who reigned for 29 years" (2).

Our author is obliged to admit that "historians do not agree on the [accession] dates or durations of the reigns of the kings of Sis **[180]**. The first of these was Ruben who, in 525 A.E. [A.D. 1076], upon the death of Gagik, went to the village of Kor'mozolo, took the mountainous regions, and died soon after. However, the date is not given. Next, his son, Constantine, made himself master of Vahka and several other places, and died in 549 A.E. [A.D. 1100]. He had ruled, alone and with his father, for a total of 24 years. T'oros, the eldest son of Constantine and his successor, ruled for 29 years and died in 578 A.E. [A.D. 1129]..." Samuel continues: "There are those who say that Ruben's son, Constantine, died in 551 A. E. [A.D. 1102], and that he and his father reigned for 26 years in all, and that after them, T'oros ruled for 18 years and died in 570 A.E. [A.D. 1121]" (1).

As may be seen, Samuel diverges from Matthew on several points. But first let us continue with our current inquiry.

Smbat the Constable (Smbat *Sparapet*), a high dignitary who belonged to the royal family, was eminently qualified to know about the origin of the dynasty. However, he tells us nothing that he has not read in Matthew. He says that in 541 A.E. [A.D. 1092], "After the death of King Gagik, and after the dispersion of his troops and princes, one among them, who was named *paron* Constantine, son of *paron* Ruben went to the Taurus Mountains where he courageously and valiantly seized control of a great part of the mountains, ruling many fortresses and districts, and firstly the castle of Vahka. In 549 A.E. [A.D. 1100], there died the great prince, *paron* Constantine. Before he died, a miraculous sign manifested itself in his castle of Vahka: lightning burst into the *majorostan*, struck a silver tray, carried it to another part of the house and placed it under seven plates. They said that this presaged the death of Constantine, who died the same year and was buried in the holy convent of Kastaghon" (2). Smbat also copies that passage in Matthew, according to which "T'oros, after having put to death the Mandale brothers, thanked God that he was able to avenge the blood of Gagik, because his grandfather was one of the Gagik's princes" (3).

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All the same, Smbat has made some changes in his summary. He understood the legend of Constantine's death in his own way. The plate which was hit by lightning became, for Smbat, a tray, սիսի, *sini* (from the Arabic). It was apart from the others and, being hit by lightning, hurled itself at the seven other plates. Matthew's expression սպասաւորաց տուն, "house of the servants," is replaced by a most curious word, **majorostan**, composed of the Greek word μαγειρείον "kitchen" or μαγειρον "cook", and the Armenian suffix *-stan*. Smbat has omitted "Kopitar'a in the Maraba country," adds the title of *paron*/baron, and what is most strange, in the spot where Matthew mentions the question of Ruben's relation to Gagik, Smbat's text has յիշխանացն ("of the princes") instead of ի զաւակացն ("of the sons"). This makes one doubt the authenticity of the words ի

գաւաղացն in Matthew's text. In any case, Smbat would not have been in doubt about the royal origin of his own ancestors.

Although our author has presented the legend of Constantine's death in an erroneous manner, he certainly understood its metaphorical meaning, relating to the duration of Constantine's reign. He has Constantine succeed his father in 541 A.E. (A.D. 1092), and so attributes to him a reign of eight years, lasting from 1092 to 1100.

All the other authors belonging to the same century as Smbat, have adopted the version found in Samuel. Vahram Rabuni, Het'um the Historian, the anonymous author of an abridged *History of the Rubenids*, the colophon writer of the royal lectionary written in 735 A.E. = 1286, even Vardan [Arewelts'i] and Kirakos [Gandzakets'i], as well as the list of the kings of Cilicia found in a manuscript from the monastery at Mush (1), all have followed Samuel's version.

The comparison of the sources makes it possible to discern the existence of two versions. The first and oldest is found in Matthew of Edessa, the other, in Samuel. Let us describe what distinguishes them.

About Ruben, Matthew knows only his name. His son Constantine, in 1097, was reigning in the country of Kopitar'a (= Gobidar'a), in Maraba, and was part of the army of Gagik. He died in 1099 or 1100. The fortress **[182]** of the Mandale brothers is named Kizistr'a in the account of the assassination of Gagik, but in the narration of T'oros' revenge, Kndr'oskavis (Gntr'osgavis?). Het'um the Historian calls the place Kizistr'a in two places. Gagik was killed in 1079.

The second version places the death of Gagik in 1076 and has Ruben appear at that date, as Gagik's relative. Ruben established his residence at Kositar'a (= Gosidar'a), but transferred it to Kolimozolo or Kor'mozolo. He died at the age of 70. His reign, and that of his son, Constantine, lasted between 24 and 26 years in all. The latter died in 1100 or 1102. The fortress of Mandale is called Kandraskavi or Kandroskavi.

The legend about Constantine's death might serve as an indication of the length of his reign, if this conjecture were not compromised by the Continuator of Smbat Sparapet, who gives Constantine a 14-year reign. The list in the manuscript of Mush, assigns him 5 years and his father, Ruben, 20 years.

The matter becomes yet more confusing when one reads another account which concerns the ancestor of the dynasty, an account which has an epic character. This is preserved by the historian Kirakos of Gandzak. Here is the quotation in full:

"One day (when the other Gagik (1) had become king), Gagik went off to hunt and became drunk. At a sultry hour, he dismounted to rest under the shade of the trees, having no one with him except one small lad, since all the others were scattered about, hunting. Greeks came upon them, recognized Gagik, seized him and took him to a fortress. When the king came to his senses from the wine, he opened his eyes and exclaimed: "Where am I?" And the Romans replied: "Where is our metropolitan Markos?" And they hurled him from the wall of the fortress with insults. He crashed to the ground and died. As for the lad who was with him, an Armenian merchant purchased him and made him his son-in-law.

Subsequently, when the lad became a man, he went hunting for partridge with another man, near the border of Cilicia. A fortress which they call Bardzrberd stood there. A Byzantine (Roman) bishop resided in this fortress. An acquaintance was struck up between the man and the bishop, and they became dear to each other. They ate and drank together for many days **[183]**. Yet the man had not put out of his mind what the Byzantines had done to his relative, King Gagik.

One day, when all the bishop's deacons had gone out of the fortress to see to some needed work, the bishop was left alone there with a youth. The hunter came close to the fortress to hunt partridge; seeing the bishop on the walls, he called to him to come out so that they might eat together. The bishop invited the man to come into the fortress, but he did not consent. So the bishop came down to him, without his deacon.

When the man saw that the bishop was coming alone, he realized that there was no one else in the fortress and he said to the man with him: "Today is a good opportunity to avenge with blood the murder of our king, which the Byzantines were responsible for. Take heed! Perhaps the bishop will send you into the fortress. If so, try to take it, and inform me by some hand signal that you have, and I will kill the bishop.

As soon as the bishop arrived, they began to eat. Once the wine gave out, the bishop said to the attendant: "Go to the fortress over there and bring us wine so we may rejoice together."

The man went and gave the bishop's order to his servant. As soon as the servant kneeled over the barrel to fetch some wine, the man seized him by his feet, turned him upside down and drowned him in the wine. Going up to the walls, he notified his lord that he had taken the fortress.

Down below the walls the hunter strangled the bishop. Then entering the fortress, he seized what was there and increased his own property both by force and deceit, until he, his sons, and grandsons ruled Cilicia, city and district. This man was the forbear of King Lewon, who enlarged the boundaries by his bravery, as we shall relate in its proper place" (1).

Samuel relates, following Matthew, that Gagik was killed by the three Greek brothers when he had returned from Abulgharib, the Armenian prince of Tarsus, but he adds that some "relate that Gagik had gone hunting, and that the Mandalean brothers, finding him asleep, took him to Kandroskavi castle and killed him there" (2).

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As may be seen, Samuel is not unaware of the epical narration that found its way into Kirakos. The guilty Mandale brothers do not figure in this story; nor does their fortress of Kizistra or Kandroskavi. The victim of Ruben's vengeance is a Greek bishop, the lord of Bardzrberd.

The tale is fanciful, however one can discern in it the historical elements from which it was formed. The death of King Gagik was avenged not by Ruben, but by his grandson, T'oros. Leon, the brother of this T'oros, having been defeated in battle with Emperor John Comnenus [John II Comnenus, 1092-1118] was taken captive to the capital with his two sons. One of them died there. The other, T'oros II, escaped from prison, took over Cilicia, and reclaimed his father's holdings. The circumstances under which he restored his domains have given birth to differing accounts. They narrate how T'oros fled from Constantinople and reached Cilicia on foot. There he presented himself to the Syrian Jacobite patriarch, At'anas [Athanasius], who gave him a steed and twelve men. They introduced the fugitive into the fortress of Amuda, from which he became master of the entire country.

According to another account, T'oros left the capital for Antioch, travelling by sea, and entered Cilicia from there. He found his brother Step'ane' there and, by cunning, they ruled over Amuda and then all the rest of the country.

A third variant, which has the character of a romance, involves a princess of the royal court who, having fallen in love with the imprisoned Armenian prince, provides him with the material means by which T'oros was able to arrive at the mountain of Vahka. There he became acquainted with a priest. T'oros' arrival greatly pleased the priest who designated him as commander of his troops. The priest hastened to inform the Armenians dwelling in the mountains about this, and they rallied to T'oros' side. First they seized Vahka fortress and then the country itself, expelling the Greeks and their agents (1).

Finally, there is a fourth version which claims that T'oros was [185] concealed in the shrubbery with ten well-armed men who suddenly entered and seized Vahka fortress (1).

These popular stories have influenced the legend of Ruben. The latter wanted to kill the murderers of Gagik, but in the legend he kills a bishop in order to seize his castle. This bishop is a remembrance of the bishop or priest who figures in the history of T'oros. The tale of the young Ruben with the merchant who becomes his father-in-law reflects the love affair of T'oros with the Byzantine princess. The historical image of the founder of the

dynasty had been erased from popular memory: instead, a legend was created with actions attributed to T'oros I and T'oros II, and adapted *mutatis mutandis* to Ruben. Consequently, this legend was created after the era of T'oros II (d. December 2, 1168). Whatever literary interest the legend may have, it has little, if any, historical value. Thus, neither the legend nor the information from historians contributes to removing from obscurity the figure of the ancestor of the Rubenids, or to clarifying his period.

Given these circumstances, a passage from Cedrenus deserves particular attention.

Emperor Basil, after completing the ruin of the Bulgarian kingdom in 1018-1019 (ind. II, 6526), went on a tour of Greece to get an idea of the condition of the country after the repeated attacks of the Bulgars. He visited Zetounion and Thermopylae. On that occasion, the historian remarks:

Ἐν δὲ τῷ διέναι τὸ Ζητούνιον τὰ ὀστέα τῶν πεσόντων ἐκεῖσε Βουλγάρων, ὀπηνίκα ὁ μάγιστρος Νικηφόρος ὁ Οὐρανὸς τὸν Σαμουήλ ἐτρέφατο, θεασάμενος ἐθαύμασεν. Ὑπερηγάσθη δὲ καὶ τὸ ἐν Θερμοπύλαις γενόμενον τεῖχος, ὃ Σκέλος ἄρτι κατονομάζεται, εἰς ἀποτροπὴν τῶν Βουλγάρων παρὰ τοῦ Ῥουπένη. (2)

"While crossing Zetounion, the Emperor (Basil) marvelled at the bones of the Bulgarians who had fallen there during Nicephorus Ouranos' victory over Samuel. He marvelled even more at [186] the wall, now called Skelos, raised by Roupenes at Thermopylae to repulse the Bulgarians."

The words *παρὰ τοῦ Ῥουπένη* have been rendered in the Latin translation as *apud Rupenam*; where Rupenes is considered a locality. But in reality, the text concerns a person named Rupenes. The illustrious Russian Byzantinist, Vasiliev, long ago pointed out that the Latin translation is faulty, and that the text concerns a certain Roupén, whose name recalls the founder of the Armenian dynasty in Cilicia. Vasiliev, though admitting that the Roupenes of Thermopylae was of Armenian origin, nonetheless, for chronological reasons, did not recognize him as the founder of the Cilician kingdom. According to him, the ancestor of the Rubenids, who appeared in 1065 (following the narration of Kirakos), could not be identified with the builder of the wall of Thermopylae (1).

We do not share this view and believe that we can demonstrate that the national traditions contain nothing which would disallow the proposed identification.

The individual charged with constructing the fortifications at Thermopylae could only have been the *strategos* for Greece. An inscription, discovered long ago at the village of Egrek (= Agarak, "cultivated field"), close to T'ort'oum, bears the name of a certain patrician, Grigor, son of the patrician Sympatius, who describes himself as the *strategos* of Larissa and Macedonia. The inscription is dated at 6515 from the creation of the world, which would be 1006-1007 (2). Without a doubt, by that date Grigor no longer occupied this position. He had returned home and was occupied with building a church at Agarak. In the West, his position had been acquired by Rupenes. When Emperor Basil [Basil II, Bulgaroctonus, 976-1025] arrived in Constantinople in the year 6527, ind. II = 1018-1019, Rupenes occupied the position of *strategos* of Larissa and Greece [187], as had Kekaumenos who, from 980 to 984 was ἐν Λαρίσση τὴν ἀρχὴν ἔχων τῆς Ἑλλάδος ["was in Larissa, ruling over Greece"] (1).

Other Armenians are known to have held important positions at that time on the Balkan frontiers: for example, Gregory Taronites in Thessalonica, and Theodorakan, in Philippopolis. There is nothing strange about Larissa being entrusted to Gregory and, after him, to Roupenes.

In his capacity as *strategos*, Roupenes must at least have had the dignity of *protospathios* and must have been between 23 and 25 years old in 1018. So it is impossible that he could have been a child in 1065, as the legend claims, or that he reigned until the year 1086 or 1092, as other sources claim. But neither the legend nor the sources that make him live until the year 1092 have any real value in this situation. Of all the information we possess, Matthew of Edessa alone counts almost as an eyewitness or earwitness. However, he provides no

indication of the time and life of the ancestor of the dynasty. Indeed, Ruben is mentioned only when Matthew is speaking about Ruben's son, Constantine. Everything that Matthew says relates to Constantine primarily and not to his father. It is "Constantine, son of Ruben, who occupied Taurus in the Kobidara country, and who belonged to Gagik's troops." It is he who established himself in Vahka and "who was part of the army of Gagik Bagratuni, son of Ashot." It is only in the third book, which he wrote after an interval of ten years, that Matthew mentions that "the father of the father" of T'oros was numbered among the princes of Gagik (according to a manuscript of Smbat, and not "his relative," as appears in the printed text). The authors who come a century after Matthew wanted to attribute all this to Ruben, for a reason which we shall see presently.

Surely Ruben could have belonged to the army of Gagik or been one of his princes. The last Bagratid king, after being despoiled of his territories, lived abroad from 1043 to 1079. The Armenian feudals who were shorn of their holdings at the time of their king or later continued, in their emigration, to recognize the authority of the king in exile. Gagik retained this prerogative until his death. Ruben, a Byzantine dignitary went at some unknown time **[188]** to the East into the midst of the emigre princes and population, and settled on Mount Taurus, perhaps in the very spot where we later find his son, Constantine. The subordination to the Bagratid monarch which was the norm one way or another, would have been valid for Ruben as well, even though he had no relationship with the Bagratid family. His name alone, so different from the Bagratid names and so alien among the Armenian feudals, suffices to reject this hypothesis. As the dynasts of ancient lineage disappeared, new ones were emerging, and it was primarily Imperial service which gave new families and a new nobility the opportunity to assert themselves. As with so many others, the honor goes to Ruben himself to be ancestor to his dynasty. However, since he returned to an Armenian milieu from Byzantium, it is probable that he was originally from Armenia itself. The name T'oros, which was used in Ruben's family, is strongly suggestive of this. We meet with the first man to bear this name during the reign of Basil—he is the prince of the district of Hashteank', located to the east of Hanzith [Andzit'/Handzit'/Anzitene]. In 443 A.E. (A.D. 994), the duke of Antioch, Michael Bourtzes, was beaten by the Egyptian army. In his camp, among others, was T'oros, prince of Hashteank', who fell into the enemies' hands. His ultimate fate is not known. It could be that Ruben was the son of this T'oros (1).

There is a curious note in Kemal-ad-Din's *History*: "In the month of Moharram in the year 601 (August 29, 1204 to August 17, 1205), the king of the Armenians, the son of Laon [Lewon], *one of the descendants of Bardas al-Fakkas*, who lived in the times of Saif-ad-Daulah, came to attack Antioch" (2). Kemal-ad-Din, a reliable historian, had a source for this information which, unfortunately, is not known. If Ruben was a descendant of Phocas, he would have preserved the Phocas surname, thus **[189]** he probably was a descendant on the female side. Ruben's father might very well have entered into an alliance with the Phocas family. Was not Bourtzes's friend, T'oros, a former supporter of Bardas Phocas? In any case, the testimony of Kemal-ad-Dn corroborates, rather than contradicts, our hypothesis about the possible relationship between Ruben and T'oros of Hashteank'.

However, the tradition preserved by Samuel claims to connect Ruben to the family of the last Gagik, upon whose death Ruben would have gone from Kasitara (for Kopitar'a) to Kolimozolo and founded his principality there. Matthew places the death of Gagik in 1079, Samuel, in 1076. Samuel tells us that Ruben had gone to Prince Abulgharib at Tarsus to conclude an alliance, which he failed to do, and that while returning from Tarsus, he was seized by the Mandale brothers and put death.

The historian Vardan Arewelts'i, on the other hand, assures us that Gagik succeeded in his mission, and that he married his younger son to the daughter of AbuIgarib; but Vardan adds that Abulgharib, after the assassination of Gagik, poisoned his son-in-law. Samuel does not seem to know about the version found in Vardan. To some extent, these disturbing divergences are likely to compromise any aspect of the story, including the date of the Gagik's death itself. There is every reason to believe that Gagik, as well as Gagik of Kars and other royal princes, met violent or natural deaths during the campaign of Romanus Diogenes [IV, 1068-1071]. Earlier, in 1065, *Kat'oghikos* Xach'ik II had died. King Gagik—of Kars— had the son of Grigor Magistros, Grigor, ordained to the position. Gagik of Ani had no sympathy for the newly-elected *kat'oghikos*, because of a grudge he had against his father, whom he held, rightly or wrongly, responsible for the fall of his kingdom. Shortly thereafter, in 1068 (1), he had a second *kat'oghikos* elected, Gevorg. Soon we see both *katoghikoi* battling each other, to the point that Grigor deposed Gevorg, stripping him of his duties. Gevorg **[190]** went to Tarsus (from Sebastia or T'avblur), undoubtedly to Prince Abulgharib. Meanwhile, Grigor went and established himself near

Gurgen's son, Gagik, at Moutar'asun. This happened in 521 A.E. (A.D. 1072). We may rightly ask why the inimical patriarchs did not seek refuge with their respective protectors, the two Gagiks. The answer is obvious: by this time, the two kings already were dead. The dissension itself between the patriarchs would be difficult to conceive if the kings still had been living (1). When Romanus Diogenes arrived at Sebastia in the spring of the year 1071, Gagik was still alive. Matthew relates that the Greeks lodged a complaint against the sons of Senekerim, Atom and Abousahl. The princes would have perished if Gagik and the renegade emir Ktrich' had not interceded with the fearsome sovereign. The emperor forgave them, but, adds our historian, "he threatened, on returning from the campaign, to suppress the faith of the Armenians". To intervene with such a fanatic it would have been difficult to find a more inappropriate mediator than Gagik, who had just killed, by excessive zeal, Mark, the bishop of Caesarea. Matthew, however, remains silent on the cruel punishment that the emperor inflicted on the third son of Senekerim, Constantine, although other sources do provide such information (2). All indications are that Gagik also died [191] as a victim of of Romanus' nefarious policy and was murdered at his instigation by the Mandale brothers, or, perhaps, by the agents of Abulgharib, if the enigmatic history of Mandale turns out to be a concocted legend.

While Samuel places the assassination of Gagik in 1076, we are inclined to shift it to the year 1071. Was Ruben still alive in this period, as the same historian asserts? It is quite possible that Ruben was still living when Gagik died. Another Gagik, one of the three sons of Gurgen, Senek'erim's eldest brother, was still living in Mutarasun in the years 1072-1073. Gurgen, the father of this Gagik, had died in 452 A.E. (A.D. 1003) (1). Gagik was born not after his father's death, but long before, such that in 1072-1073 he would have been in his eighties. The same could be said for Ruben, born at the end of the 10th century, as we already proposed, who would have been between 23 and 25 years old in 1018, and could have lived until 1071-1076. Samuel gives him a lifespan of 70 years, which attests to his longevity. Therefore, it is not on this date that he would have made his appearance but, on the contrary, this date would mark the end of his career.

Ruben, a Byzantine dignitary, would have left his service and gone to the East; perhaps he may have been named *strategos* in some area, like so many other Armenians. After the fall of an Armenian dynasty in Byzantium, there was a marked reaction against Armenian influence; it was accentuated especially under Constantine Monomachus, Andronicus Doukas, and Romanus Diogenes, and led to a complete break at the time of the Crusades. It was during the period of this senseless reaction that Ruben would have installed himself in the rocky heights of the Taurus. His residence [192] probably would have been located where we later meet with his son and successor, Constantine. Matthew places this in the area of Kopitar'a or Gobidar'a (1), in "Maraba." In an entry under the year 1111, he narrates how the Turks entered the Anazarba country and infested all the lands and "Marba" (a contracted form of Maraba).

According to this passage, we should search for Maraba in the environs of Anazarba. However, in our opinion, the text has a different sense, that is to say, the country of Anazarba and Maraba are being contrasted. By the country "from Anazarba," we must understand southern Cilicia, the plain, while Maraba would mean the mountainous part. No locality with this name is known in the Taurus (2).

Could it be that Maraba is a false reading for Tarapa (or Daraba), Մարապա for Տարապա? In such a case we may find an equivalent in Τροπία of Constantine Porphyrogenitus, the area that Leon the Philosopher gifted to Melias [Mleh], founder of Lykandos. With some ingenuity, this word could be identified with *darub*, the plural form of the Arabic word *darb* "door, gate". The Arabs so styled passes, especially in the chain of the Taurus, which the Greeks called κλεισοῦρα, and the Armenians կապան (*kapan*). The mountainous region was called *bilad-ad-durub* in Arabic. Ousama, in his autobiography, says that "the descendants of Roubal (= Ruben), Tarous (T'oros) and Lawoun (Lewon), the Armenians, were lords of Al-Massisa, Antartous, Adhana and the Passes of *ad-douroub*" (3). T'oros' brother, Mleh (1169-1175) is called by the Arabs, the prince or "lord of the passes," *sahib ad-durub* (4). Ruben was supremely the "lord of the passes." The cradle of the Rubenids probably should be sought in the Lykandos area (5).

[193] For the next generation the figure of Ruben remained in the shadows and, if not completely forgotten, it remained vague. This situation is easily explained. At the time of Ruben's appearance, there were many Armenian princes, spread over all the territories from Sebastia to Antioch and from Cilician Seleucia to Edessa,

who were battling for their independence and vying for first place. Alongside representatives of the royal dynasties of Ani, Kars, and Van, were many families of a different origin. It is enough simply to name some of them: Philaretus, the *curopalate* T'oros, Gabriel of Melitene, Gogh Basil ("Basil the Thief"), T'at'ul of Marash, Abulgharib of Tarsus, Oshin of Lambron and many others. As long as the last exiled kings were living, no one dared to seek first place, since hereditary rank still carried its prestige. Around 1070 we see Philaretus, independent lord of an enormous area, which he ruled until 1092. He found fertile ground for his ambitions, not only thanks to the debacle of Romanus Diogenes, but also thanks to the presumed death of King Gagik. That is the reason that his death must be placed in 1071. After Philaretus, one of his vassals, Gogh Basil, inherited his ambitions and ruled until the year 1112.

During this entire period Ruben and his son, Constantine, were occupied with consolidating their position in the Taurus, with the aim of eventually moving toward the south of the Cilician plain. However, none of their activities thus far were the sort which had a great impact or would have contributed to their popularity. But now, just on the eve of the death of the most powerful prince, Gogh Basil, we hear about an exploit of Constantine's son, T'oros, namely, that he had taken vengeance on the murderers of King Gagik. This deed, real or invented, would serve to legitimize his authority and pretensions, not only with respect to the succession of Gogh Basil, but also it would even lay claim to the legacy of the Bagratid crown. Subsequently, another step in this direction was taken when Ruben, the ancestor of the family, was declared to be a relative of the last king, Gagik.

[194] There is yet another proof that the first Rubenid princes were not as renowned as has been thought. After the destruction of the kingdom of Ani, the seat of the *kat'oghikos* began to move from place to place. From Ani, it was moved to Sebastia, near the exiled king, where two *kat'oghikoi*, Petros and Xach'ik, ended their days. After the death of Xach'ik in 1065, Gagik of Kars elevated Grigor Pahlawuni to the *kat'oghikosate*. A second *kat'oghikos* was ordained at the order of Gagik of Kars. The two heads of the Church quarelled and then withdrew, one to Gagik, son of Gurgin, and the other to Abulgharib. Without a doubt, the reason that *kat'oghikos* Grigor went to Philaretus, was the death of Gurgin's son, Gagik. Now it happened that Grigor, after going on a mission to T'or'nik from Philaretus, did not want to return to Philaretus. Thus Philaretus chose yet a third *kat'oghikos*, Sargis, in 1073, and installed him at Honi, in Jahan (Lykandos). Sargis died in 1077 and was succeeded by T'eodoros. In 1085, Philaretus lost Honi with the region of Melitene and *Kat'oghikos* T'eodoros was unable to move his seat to Marash, though Philaretus summoned him there. The latter prince did not hesitate to have yet a fourth *kat'oghikos* ordained, Poghos, who resided in Marash. In 1081, at Ani, a fifth *kat'oghikos* was ordained, Barsegh (Basil), by the demand of his own brothers, who were sufficiently powerful to have a patriarch of their own. Barsegh had more administrative sense than Gregory, and undertook the task of restoring the unity of patriarchal power. Meanwhile, Grigor travelled to Egypt and ordained a sixth *kat'oghikos* for the Armenian community there. Barsegh, authorized by Sultan Malik-Shah, went to Honi, drove out the *kat'oghikos* T'eodoros, and went to Edessa. Boghos, the *kat'oghikos* of Marash, also went to Edessa to retrieve from Barsegh the Cross of Varag, which he had taken from T'eodoros, and Boghos died in Edessa in 1093. The fact that Barsegh did not dare to touch Boghos, who was under Philaretus' patronage, makes us believe that Philaretus was still alive in Marash at the time. From Edessa, Barsegh went to Kesoun, near Gogh Basil, and established himself there. After his travels, *Kat'oghikos* Grigor also went there.

As can be seen, the movement and division of spiritual authority was conditioned by the notable political powers of the day. The head of the Church sought out the court of the most powerful prince, while the latter would claim the *kat'oghikos* **[195]** as a base of his moral authority. The displacement of the patriarchal throne from one location to another—Sebastia, Moutar'asun, Tarsus, Honi, Marash, Edessa, and Kesoun—accords perfectly with the successive passage of political primacy from one chief to another, from the royal princes to Philaretus, then to *curopalate* T'oros and finally to Gogh Basil.

The Rubenid princes do not figure in this. There is no mention of a *kat'oghikos* seated among them. This is an indication that they did not play an important role until after the death of Gogh Basil. The seat of the patriarch was moved from Kesoun to Romkala/Hromkla instead of relocating near the Rubenids, but this was for another reason: the patriarch rightfully hesitated about choosing between the Rubenids and their rivals, the Hetumids.

In any case, information from the Armenian sources, stripped of legendary elements, in no way prevents the identification of Roupenes, *strategos* of Greece, with the ancestor of the Rubenid dynasty of Cilicia.

Notes

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(1) Matt'e'os Ur'hayets'i, *Zhamanakagrut'iwn [Chronicle]*, M. Me'lik'-Adamean and N. Te'r-Mik'aye'lean, editors (Vagharshapat, 1898) p. 257; E. Dulaurier, *Chronique de Matthieu D'Édesse* (Paris, 1858) ch. 151. [An English translation of Matthew's *Chronicle* (2017) made from the same 1898 Classical Armenian text, and following its pagination, is available at Internet Archive for reading online and/or downloading: [The Chronicle of Matthew of Edessa](#). The *grabar* text also is at Internet Archive: [Պատմութիւն արարեալ Մատթէոսի մեծի քահանայի Ուռհայեցոյ](#).]

(2) *Ibid.*, pp. 269-270. Matthieu D'Édesse, ch. 161.

(3) *Ibid.*, p. 320-321. Matthieu D'Édesse, ch. 207.

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(1) Samuel of Ani, p. 116.

(2) *Ibid.*, p. 121.

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(1) *Ibid.*, pp. 135-136.

(2) *Smbat le Connétable*, pp. 87-88, Paris edition. [An English translation of Smbat Sparapet's *Chronicle* (2009) made from the better Classical Armenian text of S. Ake"lean (Venice, 1956), is available at Internet Archive for reading online and/or downloading: [Smbat Sparapet's Chronicle](#). Ake"lean's *grabar* text also is at Internet Archive: [Սմբատայ սպարապետի տարեգիրք](#).]

(3) *Ibid.*, pp. 90-91.

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(1) G. Srowanjtean [Garegin Sruandzeants'/Karekin Servantsian], *Hnots' ew Norots'*, p. 100 ff.

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(1) Gagik of Kars, rather than Gagik of Ani, is referred to here.

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(1) Kirakos, *Hist.*, pp. 58-59. [An English translation of Kirakos Gandzakets'i's *History of the Armenians* (1986), made from the critical edition of K.A. Melik'-Ohanjanyan (Erevan, 1961) and following its pagination, is available at Internet Archive for reading online and/or downloading: [Kirakos Gandzakets'i's History](#). Melik'-Ohanjanyan's *grabar* text also is at Internet Archive: [Կիրակոս Գանձակեցի Պատմութիւն հայոց](#).] The citation is on pp. 102-104 of these editions.

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(1) Samuel, p. 131. Michel le Syrien, III, p. 281 (Chabot translation) knows the first version and calls Athanasius metropolitan of the place; the same account appears in the Armenian translation of Michael, p. 422 (1871 edition), et p. 427 (1870 edition). [An English translation of Michael the Syrian's *History*, made from the editions of 1870 and 1871 is available at Internet Archive for reading online and/or downloading: [The Chronicle of Michael the Great, Patriarch of the Syrians](#). Also at Internet Archive are: the [1870 Armenian edition](#); the [1871 Armenian edition](#); and an English translation of the original Syriac text, made by Matti Moosa, with excellent detailed notes: [The 10th-12th Centuries from Michael Rabo's Chronicle](#).]

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(1) Jean Dardel, *Chronique d'Arménie*, in *Hist. des Croisades*, Doc. armén., II, ch. 8. The author relates the legend about Constantine, son of Ruben, but it is evident that it concerns an exploit of T'oros.

(2) Cedr. II, p. 475.

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(1) *Zhurnal Ministerstva narodnago Prosveshchenija*, July, 1881, pp. 116-117.

(2) The inscription was found and published by the Mxit'arist father, Nerse's Sargissian, **ՏԵԴԱԳՐՈՒԹԻԼՆ ՀԱՅՈԳ ՄԵԾԱԿ** [*Teghagrut'iwn Hayots' Metsats' [Itineraries of Greater Armenia]*], p. 92, which Brosset reported in *Mém. de l'Acad. des sciences de St.-Pétersb.*, VIIe série, t. VIII, 1864.

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(1) *Stratégikon*, # 169.

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(1) Thoros/T'oros is the medieval form of Theodoros and is explained by the action of the double accent (at the beginning and at the end of the polysyllabic words) which produces a contraction of the inner syllables. It is a peculiarity of the Armenian dialects of the South, including the Hashtean'k' area.

(2) Kemal-ad-Din, *Histoire d'Alep*, in *Revue de l'Orient latin*, 1897, p. 41.

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(1) Chapter 98 in *Matthew of Edessa* is dedicated to the events of the year ԶԺԴ 518 A.E. (A.D. 1069) . Since the historian has put the coronation of Romanus under that year, we should read it as ԶԺԵ 517 A.E. (A.D. 1068). The ordination of Gevorg is put in the same year.

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(1) The origin of the quarrel of the patriarchs is explained by Mathew in a way that is not very convincing. According to him, Grigor had agreed with Gevorg to give up the administration of the Church and to withdraw to a monastery to embrace the ascetic life. But Gevorg betrayed his promise and consented to ascend the patriarchal throne. Grigor was indignant. This is a conjecture of our historian which does not deserve the least credibility. First of all, Grigor himself had ordained Gevorg; then he did not go to a retreat, but went on a

journey to Constantinople, Rome, and Egypt, where he again consecrated a *kat'oghikos*, and returned to Armenia, first to his mother's home. Later he went to Ani and settled at the court of the mighty prince Gogh Basil, in Kesoun, where he died in 1105. Our explanation is based on the fact that Grigor was elected "by order of Gagik, son of Abas" (chapter 90), and Gevorg, by the will of the king, that is to say, of Gagik of Ani (ch. 99).

(2) Abulfarag Bar Hebraeus, *Chronicon Syriacum*, p. 272 (see *Byzantion*, IX, fasc 2, p. 640). Matthew seems to have known about the the blinding of Constantine. In the sad meditations he makes about the fate of the Armenians on the occasion of the ravages of the Turks in Sebastia,

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(2 continued) he complains that the Byzantines destroyed "their security walls," and deported their brave princes, thus leaving the Armenians at the whim of incompetent Byzantine eunuchs, incapable of resisting their enemies. Subsequently, reviewing these events, he alludes to the time of Romanus Diogenes, saying: "the Greeks are quick to flee before the Persians (Turks), and think only of overturning and wrecking the faith of the true believers in Christ, since as soon as they find brave and powerful men, they *blind their eyes*" (ch. 84).

(1) Asoghik, III, ch. 46.

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(1) The *kat'oghikos* Grigor K'aravezh (1192-1194) perished at Kopitar'a according to Smbat Sparapet, p. 107. Michael the Syrian is aware of this and calls the place Goubidara (III, p. 413).

(2) We cannot identify this with the village of Maraba which the maps show to the north of Ablasta.

(3) *Revue de l'Orient latin*, 1894, p. 521.

(4) Ibn al-Athir, *Recueil des Hist. des Croisades. Hist. Orient.* II, p. 307.

(5) The historian Het'um also places in Lykandos the fortress of Mandale, Kendroskav (*Recueil des Historiens des Croisades*, I, p. 471). But this information is missing in the new edition of Het'um (in the *Bréviare du roi Oshin*, published by Archbishop Artavazd, 1933).

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(5 continued) Thus it is an interpolation. We note, as mentioned above, that the old form of the name of Zeytun city is Ζητούνιον. This word has nothing in common with the word *zeyt'un* "olive." Might this name possibly be a creation of Ruben's, in imitation of Ζητούνιον?